

Editorial Ecozon@ Issue 7.2

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“Urban Ecologies” is the thematic focus of the Special Section and the Creative Writing and Arts Section of this number of *Ecozon@*. As Catrin Gersdorf notes in her introduction, the city is traditionally associated with processes of replacing rather than harbouring nature, and ecocritics for a long time neglected towns and cities, preferring to focus on texts and genres devoted to the organic and the wild rather than civilisation and the built environment. Throughout most of history, the human population has lived in a rural setting. Although the first cities emerged over five thousand years ago, only a small proportion of people lived in them until relatively recently. This is no longer the case: today, over 50 percent of the world’s population live in urban areas, and the figure is steadily increasing. Building sustainable cities and managing urban areas are among the most important development challenges of the 21st century. The world’s growing cities need to build basic infrastructure in a sustainable way, and even cities with a relatively stable population in high-income nations need to adapt existing infrastructure and patterns of consumption to become sustainable. Cities account for 75 percent of the world’s energy use, and over 70 percent of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions. A resource-intensive consumer society currently drives urban lifestyles, contributing significantly to the pressure on the planet’s ecosystems. At the same time, cities have the potential to act as hubs for the development of smart, sustainable solutions that can help meet human needs while minimising the ecological footprint. Providing transport, housing, electricity, water and sanitation for a densely settled urban population is typically cheaper and less environmentally damaging than providing a similar level of services to a dispersed rural population. It falls to town planners and architects in the first instance to create the cities of the future. But fiction, poetry, art, film and popular culture also have a part to play in imagining an alternative urbanity.

Gersdorf starts her introduction to the special section by asking whether the High Line in central New York, formerly a stretch of elevated railway, now a 20-block popular recreational area, can be regarded as a model of how to accommodate the presence of non-human life (mainly plants, but also animals) in the modern city. She then traces the emergence of Urban Ecology in the 1970s, and notes how Urban Ecocriticism, which began in the 1990s, has witnessed a spate of recent publications. The four essays presented in this journal use literature and film as a diagnostic tool for understanding the history of the city in the modern imagination, and as a resource from which new ideas and conceptions of urbanity can be gained. Rachel Nisbet writes on James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*; Christopher Schliephake looks at the work of an American visual artist and a South Korean film maker; María Isabel Pérez Ramos examines three dystopian

images of the urban future set in the arid south west of the US, and Chris Pak views narratives and images of future cities in the writing of H.G. Wells, Frederick Turner and Kim Stanley Robinson from the perspective of the Anthropocene.

The General Section contains five essays. In the first, Anastasia Cardone examines the aesthetic concepts underlying Annie Dillard's classic of contemporary American nature writing, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* (1974). Nora Vergara Legarra discusses (in Spanish) the geographical and social environment of Barbados as represented in the poems of Kamau Brathwaite, in which place is reconfigured through African-derived orality, approaching them from a perspective of colonial difference. John Ryan considers botanical melancholia in the work of the Australian poet and activist John Kinsella, arguing that his radical pastoralism provides an essential counterforce to prevailing idyllic depictions of the Australian landscape. Writing in Italian, Rossella Di Rosa analyses the ecological thinking in *Alonso e i visionari* (1996), Anna Maria Ortese's last novel, and shows how the author shared and even anticipated some of the key tenets of Posthumanism and contemporary Animal Studies. Finally, Katarzyna Olga Beilin reviews the experiments in alternative socio-economic structures which have emerged in Spain in response to economic crisis and climate change, and assesses the role which considerations of individual wellbeing play in the cultures of these forms of alternative biopolitics.

The Creative Writing and Arts section presents photos by Laura Sánchez-Vizcaíno (to whom we owe the image on the cover of this issue) and Christian Arpaia, and poems by Kathryn Jo Kirkpatrick and Dean Anthony Brink. In her introduction, Serenella Iovino draws out the part these artists working respectively in Spain, Italy, the United States and Taiwan play in the contributing to the "naturalcultural imagination of and around urban ecologies".

The reviews section presents detailed assessments of Christophe Bonneuil's important publication, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*, and works on bullfighting in contemporary Spain, reviewed by Michael Boyden and Kathleen Connolly.

We hope our readers will find pleasure as well as instruction in this latest number of Ecozon@.